



Whether Common or Not

By WILL N. MAUPIN.

The Old and the New

Just a sittin' round th' fire, all th' Kiddies Six an' me—
'Ceptin' one—th' Little Woman rockin' babe upon her knee.
Me a smokin' an' a thinkin' o' th' almost vanished year
That's about t' go forever—an' th' new one drawin' near.
Biggest Kiddies almost noddin', waitin' f'r th' noise an' din
That'll soon break loose t' tell us that the new year's ushered in.
Me a thinkin'! We, I reckon that each one o' you'll believe
That a fellow's got "thinks" comin' as he sits at new year's eve.

Just a thinkin' o' th' blessin's that th' Lord upon me shed
Durin' all th' days that gathered in th' year that's nearly dead;
O' th' joys that made 'em bright, smile o' cheer that made me strong
F'r t' meet my ev'ry duty that th' ol' year brung along.
Just a thinkin' o' th' treasures that I can not count in gold,
'Cause th' love o' wife an' kiddies is a treasure yet untold.
Lights o' home an' childish laughter! What delightful dreams we weave
In th' little snug home harbor as we sit at new year's eve.

Just a thinkin' an' a dreamin' o' th' old year's happy times
As I sit before th' fire waitin' f'or th' new year's chimes.
Days o' love while we was watchin' little kiddies' lives unfold;
Days o' comradeship while silver threads were minglin' with th' gold
O' th' Little Woman rockin' as she croons th' babe t' sleep,
In her eyes th' love light shinin' as we new year's vigils keep;
Days o' toil made bright an' happy by each kiddie's merry shout—
O, it's sweet t' sit a dreamin' as th' old year passes out.

Hark! Th' new year's bells are ringin'; gone the old year's doubts an' fears
T' th' limbo where has gathered all th' long since vanished years.
So I waken from my dreamin' as my kiddies arms entwine,
An' I thank th' Lord f'r givin' all th' blessin's that are mine.
New year's morn! An may th' new year be as full o' love untold
As was spread around my pathway as I journeyed through th' old.
Grant me, Lord, th' strength an' courage t' be worthy o' th' love.
O my little fam'ly circle—it's my richest treasure trove!

"Days That Are Gone."

Remember the old-time "watch meetings" we used to have? Too bad they have fallen into disuse, for we used to have some mighty good times attending them—to say nothing of receiving an uplift that helped us well along into the new year. O' I know the young folks have parties now and watch the old year out and the new year in, but they don't get out of such gatherings what we old-timers used to get out of those "watch meetings." Nowadays they make fudge and play cards and giggle. Then we used to sing and listen to good music and hear Elder Ferguson, and Elder Wetzel, and Deacon Holmes, and Brother Haynes, and Sister Lowrie,

and Sister Bedford, and a lot of others, tell their experiences.

We didn't go hungry at all of those old "watch meetings," for most of the time there would be a lunch along about 11 o'clock—not a church sociable, or anything like that, but just a plain lunch, with rather subdued conversation and not much laughter. Just before midnight a solemn hush would fall over the gathering, and it didn't take much of an imagination to hear wings and whispers and echoing music not made by earthly hands. And just as the clock tolled the hour of midnight, the good pastor would kneel, with all of the watchers, and pour forth a prayer that the new year might be full of richest blessings for all mankind. Then a rousing rallying song or two would be sung, and with laughter and good cheer and hearty wishes we'd start for home through the crispy cold of the first January morning.

I remember one delightful old woman who seldom failed to attend the "watch meetings." She was almost blind, practically helpless from rheumatism, and so far as known without a relative on earth. For more than forty years before she died she lived alone, for husband and children were waiting for her over yonder. My nine or ten years' of experience had not taught me to understand how Aunt Charlotte could be thankful for anything. She was poor, but she rested secure in the words, "never have I seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread." She had a smile for everybody, and Aunt Charlotte's little home was a refuge for every small boy and girl in the village. Every "watch meeting" this old and crippled woman would tell us of the blessings that the dying year had brought her. As I said, I didn't understand then; I am beginning to understand now.

If there happened to be good sleighing when the new year dawned, didn't we young folks have a high old time on the evening of New Year's Day. It's all right to go buggyring in a narrow seated single buggy with "her," of course; but there's only one way for young folks to go sleigh-riding, and that's the old-fashioned "bobsled" way. Four horses to the "bobsled," every horse loaded with sleighbells, and about four "bobsleds" full. Full of rollicking, joyous young folks unspoiled by fudge parties and dressing for the opera and all that sort of thing. Fill the wagonbox on the "bobs" about two-thirds full of sweet hay, and then pile in the blankets and the buffalo robes. By the way, what's become of all those buffalo robes? Then pack each wagonbox as full as it will hold of young folks—O, they'll pair off, all right, all right—tuck in the blankets and robes, and away we go!

The young folks of today may really enjoy themselves with their box parties at the theatre, and their receptions and soirees and all that sort of thing, but if I could drop about thirty years or such a matter from my shoulders tonight, the first thing I'd do wouldn't be to go to any theatre or reception or soiree. Not me! The first thing I'd do would be to pass the word around

that the "boys" were getting things ready for a "bobsled party!" I wouldn't worry about the girls—they'd be able to get ready for any old good time in less than an hour in those days. They have to take the whole afternoon to it now. We "boys" wouldn't have to shave and put on clawhammers and dinky little patent leather pumps for that sort of a social affair. Not us! We'd hike home from work, stow away enough chum to make a dyspeptic writhe in agony to see, and without stopping to change a single garment would hurry out to get the horses harnessed and the "bobs" prepared. And about 7:30 we start out after the girls—and we'd always find 'em ready on the minute, too.

And then we'd make things hum for about three hours. Remember the songs we used to sing? "Jingle Bells," "Goodby, my Lover, Goodby," "Singin' Skewl," "Good Night, Ladies," "Goin' Back to Dixie," "Suwanee River," "Old Kentucky Home," and all the rest of them—they'll come to your mind as you sit and think of those old days. And if we "boys" were feeling just a bit flush, which wasn't usual so soon after Christmas, we'd have a little oyster supper at the village restaurant after the ride. Not oysters in bulk, almost fresh from their ocean bed. Say, I must have been almost a man grown before I saw an oyster that had never been in a can. No sir; our oyster suppers were from the good old cans marked "Cove," and they were mighty good eaten those days, believe me.

The oysters consumed we'd take the girl's home, and every last one of us would be asleep before midnight. As a result the girls were all able to be up in time to wash the breakfast dishes before going to school, and we "boys" would have the stores opened and swept out before 7 o'clock, or the print shop cleaned up and warm, or the day's wood cut before the schoolbell rang. Nowadays the young folks don't get their parties started much before the time we used to be saying "good night" to our sweethearts; and nowadays the morning after finds a lot of pale-faced lassies in bed until mothers have the dishes washed and put away, and lads who look like they had been shot through a spell of illness yawn through what they call a "day's work." Not all of them, of course, but most of them.

And the "taffy pulls," and the "popcorn parties," and such like! Every now and then the Little Woman drags me out to a social function, and as I watch a bunch of men and women of average intelligence playing "progressive high five," or some such intellectual game, I feel like jumping up and shouting: "Oh, for goodness sake, let's play 'clap in and clap out,' or 'charades,' or 'Jacob and Ruth,' or 'weevilly wheat,' or 'ship's coming in,' or something else that requires real action and at least some gray matter!"

Wow! Wouldn't I like to take some of the young folks I know now and make 'em sleep in one of those old-time bed rooms that could, and did, get 'steen degrees colder than the weather outside. Wouldn't it be a picnic to watch 'em shiver as they jerked off their clothes? And wouldn't it make us old-timers yell with glee to watch 'em crawl out of bed with the frost an inch thick on the windows and the air in the room so cold it actually made the lungs ache. Take one of our furnace-warmed young fellows back to one of those old-time winter bedrooms and he wouldn't know what to do. We did, didn't we? By jinks, we practiced up on it until we could actually get all of our clothes on

excepting our boots without getting out of bed. We could have got the boots on if the old things hadn't got a crimp in the counter, and were usually frozen stiff before morning.

Well, the best I can wish for my young friends today is that the new year just dawned will afford them just as much innocent pleasure as the years used to afford us old-timers when we were young folks.

A Betrayed Confidence

My old friend, J. P. Blunt of Iowa, will just have to forgive me for betraying his confidence. I can't help it—and I don't believe I would if I could. Now me and Blunt—or Blunt and I—have a hobby in common. We delight in bobbing for bullheads in season. Hence the story—and the betrayed confidence.

A few months ago Blunt sent one of my "bullhead stories" to a friend of his in Canada, whereupon his Canadian friend wrote a letter in which he flouted bullheads and invited Blunt to visit Canada and catch some real fish. This was "pie" for Blunt. I can see his eyes twinkling as he framed up the joke on that Canadian.

Blunt sat down and wrote to a friend of his living on the gulf coast in Texas, and that Texas friend sent him a handful of fish scales—scales from the whoppingest big fish that grow in gulf waters, and they grow some mighty big ones. Then Blunt wrote another letter to that Canadian, relating a story about a big catch in one of Iowa's "little rivers," enclosing some of those big scales as proof of the catch. He sent me a couple of scales, each as big as the top off a quart fruit jar. He says he has received several letters since from his Canadian friend, but never a word in any of them about fishing in Canada.

Blunt says he expects his friend to get wise in about six months, being a Briton by birth and a Canadian by adoption.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Walks and Words of Jesus and New Sayings. A paragraph harmony of the four gospels. Originally compiled by Rev. M. N. Olmstead. Published by G. Mortimer McClintock, Brookline, Mass. Morocco bound. Price, \$1.50.

Treason of the Blood. A novel of the south of today. By Estelle H. Manning-Brewer. The Torch Press, Cedar Rapids, Ia. Price, \$1.00, net.

Weather Forecasts. For the year ending December 31, 1912. By C. C. Blake, Richland, Kan. Published by Crane & Co., Topeka, Kan. Price, \$1.00. (Pamphlet.)

Social Forces in American History. By A. M. Simons. The Macmillan company, publishers, 66 Fifth Ave., New York. Price, \$1.50, net.

Bible Wines vs. The Saloon Keeper's Bible. A study of the two-wine theory of the scriptures and an arraignment of the argument for biblical sanction of the use of intoxicants. By Rev. Orin B. Whitmore, Seattle, Wash. Press of the Alaska Printing Co., Seattle, Wash.

The Modern Man and the Church. By John F. Dobbs, M. A., pastor of the First Reformed church, Syracuse, N. Y. Fleming H. Revell Co., publishers, 158 Fifth Ave., New York. Price, \$1.25, net.

Influencing Men in Business. The psychology of argument and suggestion. By Walter Dill Scott, Ph. D., director of the psychological laboratory Northwestern university. The Ronald Press Company, New York. Price, \$1.00.

The American Republic. A text on civics for high schools, academies and normal schools. By S. E. Forman. The Century Company, New York. Price, \$1.10, net.